

Introduction

Democratic government requires trust: people need to know and believe that the government is telling the truth. Without information about what the government is doing and why, citizens cannot exercise democratic control over government institutions.

During his first year in office, President Clinton became concerned about reports that the government had conducted unethical secret human radiation experiments during the Cold War. To address this issue, in January 1994, President Clinton established the Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments (ACHRE), chaired by bioethicist Dr. Ruth Faden of Johns Hopkins University. The President also directed all Federal agencies to search for records related to human subjects radiation research and provide them to the Advisory Committee.

The Committee's charge was to provide advice regarding scientific and ethical issues related to biomedical experiments that involved ionizing radiation and certain intentional releases of radiation. The President directed the Committee to focus on the period 1944 to 1974 (before regulations on human subject research were adopted by the Department of Health Education and Welfare). The Advisory Committee published an interim report in 1994, and a final report in October of 1995. Two years of work culminated with a final report containing 23 findings and 18 specific recommendations.

After the Advisory Committee made its recommendations, Federal agencies sponsored a 2-day workshop for members of the public concerned about these issues. The workshop gave private citizens with an interest in human radiation experiments an opportunity to provide input into the government response to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. The Administration has considered the views of the stakeholders in responding to ACHRE's recommendations. The full transcript of this workshop is available on the Internet (www.ohre.doe.gov).

This report presents the Administration's actions to respond to ACHRE's recommendations. The Administration has adopted most of the Committee's recommendations, has done more than the Committee recommended in a few instances, and has not accepted a few of the Committee's recommendations. This report explains these decisions.

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This report is divided into three sections. Part 1: Openness in Government, describes steps the Administration has taken to make government records of human radiation experiments readily available to the public. Part 2: Protecting Future Human Subjects, sets forth the Administration's actions to strengthen the protection of human subjects. Part 3: Righting Past Wrongs, summarizes the Administration's efforts to notify the public and individuals about past human radiation experiments and bring justice to those affected by the government's mistakes.

This report presents those actions that are completed or underway. The Administration will continue to take steps to open the government's records, raise ethical standards, and right the wrongs of the past.